

for women was based partly upon the opinion that

... members of the public, not yet convinced of the advisability of having women in the military service, were prone to think, if they saw women in theatrical performances, that the Army had no real need for them.³⁸

For men, especially where returned combat heroes were used, there seemed to be a more favorable public impression that singing and dancing assignments were only a brief interlude in combat. Eventually even this tolerance was at times overstrained, and the Director's staff noted that "the Bureau is having the same type of trouble with men participating in theatricals."³⁹ A great many such projects for men came to be refused, "because of the critical manpower situation and the present need for all available military personnel."⁴⁰

For the WAC, the problem continued to be one not merely of economy but of public acceptance. Director Hobby stated, as one of the Corps' major principles:

It is contrary to policy to . . . sanction appearance in public where this might give the impression of frivolity or lack of serious purpose or occupation. . . . It is also contrary to policy to move WAC units over considerable distances except for necessary and official purposes.⁴¹

As the Army's practice of fostering home-talent post shows grew, the War Department, at the request of field stations, permitted Wacs to appear in such shows even when they journeyed to nearby stations, provided that their absence from home stations was not more than twelve hours and that they were accompanied by a WAC officer. Later, at the request of Miss Sarah Blanding of the Secretary of War's Recreational Committee, this ruling was extended so that commanding gen-

erals might authorize a longer period of absence from duty for performances before audiences composed entirely of patients in Army hospitals.⁴²

There was no equally successful solution to the demand for WAC units to appear in civic parades and other celebrations. Military posts were accustomed to contributing a company to grace patriotic occasions in nearby communities, but could ordinarily divide the honor among a number of companies. Since the WAC ordinarily had only one company at a station, and was in great demand as a curiosity, its members were frequently forced to augment their military schedule with long marches in local parades, often with the loss of most of a working day. Colonel Hobby stated forcibly to WAC staff officers her opinion that "they must not be pulled off their jobs because somebody wants to see a parade."⁴³

Post commanders ordinarily agreed heartily and did what they could to check the practice. Unfortunately, civilian patriotic groups were numerous and their requests not only incessant but difficult to refuse diplomatically. For example, in one brief period in one city, Masonic and Eastern Star groups asked for "from 60 to 100 Wacs to participate in a pageant"; the Confederate Memorial Committee asked

³⁸ AAF WAC Hist.

³⁹ Ltr, WAC Stf Dir AAF WFTC to Exec WAC, 23 Dec 43, and reply. SPWA 353.8.

⁴⁰ Ltr, Chief Ord Info, New York, Ord Dist, to Dir WAC, 29 Dec 43, and answer, 4 Jan 44. SPWA 353.8.

⁴¹ 10th Ind, Dir WAC to Dir Contl Div ASF, 27 Oct 43, to Bsc Ltr, Air IG to CG AAF CTTC, sub: Alleged Discrimination Against Negro Soldiers at Sioux Falls, S. D., SPWA 291.2.

⁴² (1) D/F, G-1 to TAG, 31 Jan 45, sub: Revision of WD Memo W635-15-43, 1 Aug 43. WDGAP 353.8, in WDWAC 353.8 (1945-46). (2) D/F, G-1 for TAG, 28 Jun 45. WDGAP 353.8 WAC, in WDWAC 353.8 (1945-46).

⁴³ Min cited n. 9.